5
FEB. 97
32 PGS.

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
STORYTELLER™

FEATURING:

THE PARADOXMAN

"Are there little pink aliens with bulging black eyes out there?"

ALSO:

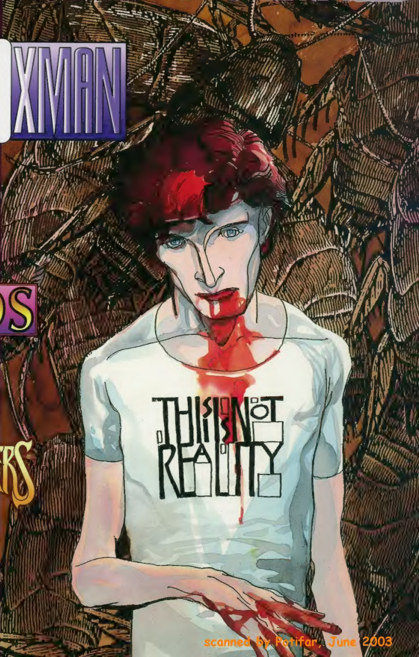
young GODS

"How about we just bend those silly old rules . . . ?"

AND:

THE FREEBOOTERS

"When I was but ten years old, my father, Jarad, built an Astrolathe of glass and wood."



DIRECT SALES
00511
7 61568 96466 0

scanned by Potifar, June 2003

PREVIOUSLY IN

How many things can happen to one man in a lifetime? For Tristan Caine the question is meaningless, for his path of time follows no linear course and his yesterdays are tomorrows experienced through a kaleidoscope of paradox.

Tormented by his own contradictions, Tristan Caine talks openly to a psychiatrist whom he is slowly beginning to distrust.

Is his tale of nuclear war, with its resultant microcosm of casualties huddled in a demolished New York City subway station, the stuff of a deranged man on the edge? Or was he really there some thirty or more years into the dark future -- running with a band of thieves pillaging futuristic gadgetry from a wild, half-simian murderer named Willy?

How unlikely is the existence of an oversized toy motorcycle sporting the colorful logo "Time Bike"?

According to Caine it is all true, every word of it. So too is Caine's growing fear for his friend Dava, who disappeared into the shadows of the bunker-like subway station shortly after Tristan saved his life with the aid of that very Time Bike.

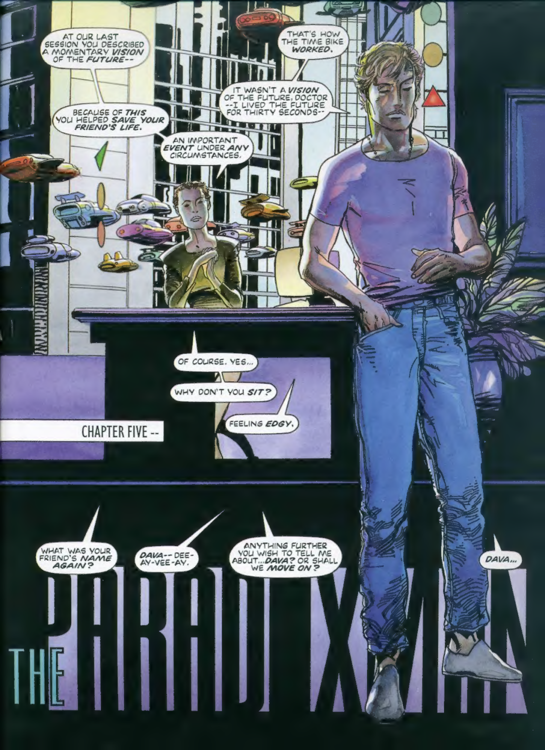
Resisting the abstract and clinging only to what he can see and hear, Tristan begins to unravel as all certainty seems to dissipate from him. Is he hallucinating, or recalling alien encounters, when his doctor appears to be an insect? Or . . .

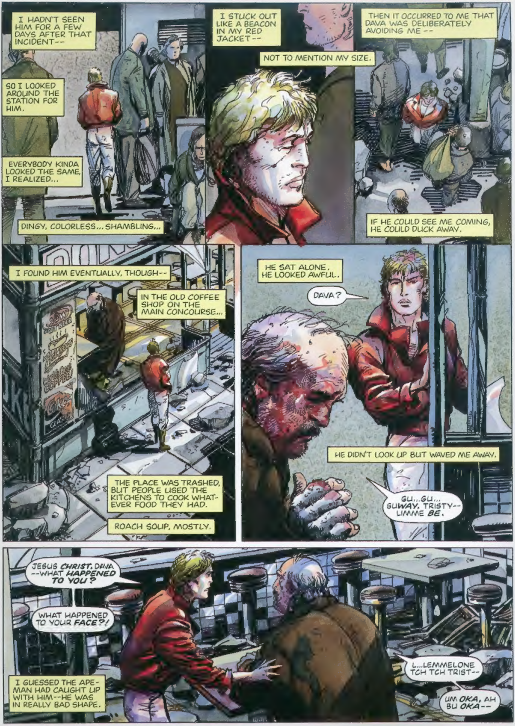
THE PARADOXMAN

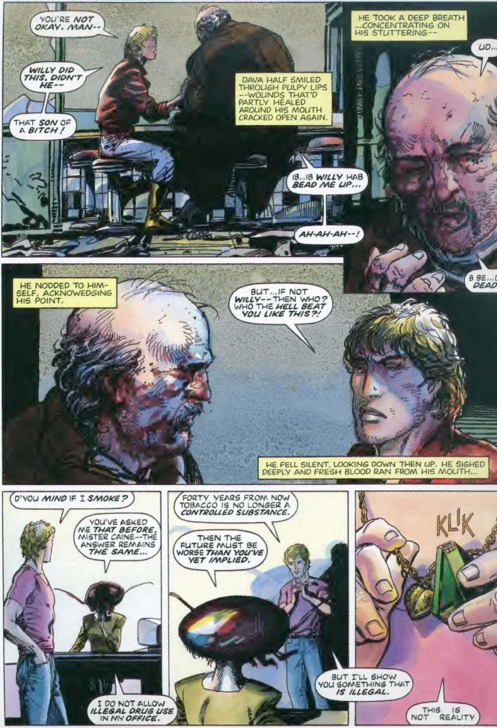
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH: STORYTELLER VOL. 1 NO. 5

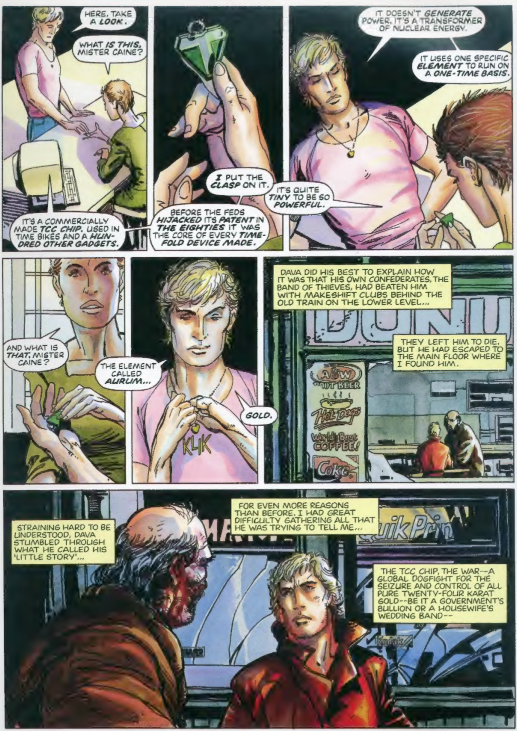
Barry Windsor-Smith: STORYTELLER™ Vol. 1 No. 5, featuring *The Paradoxman™*, *Young Gods™*, and *The Freebooters®*. Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222.

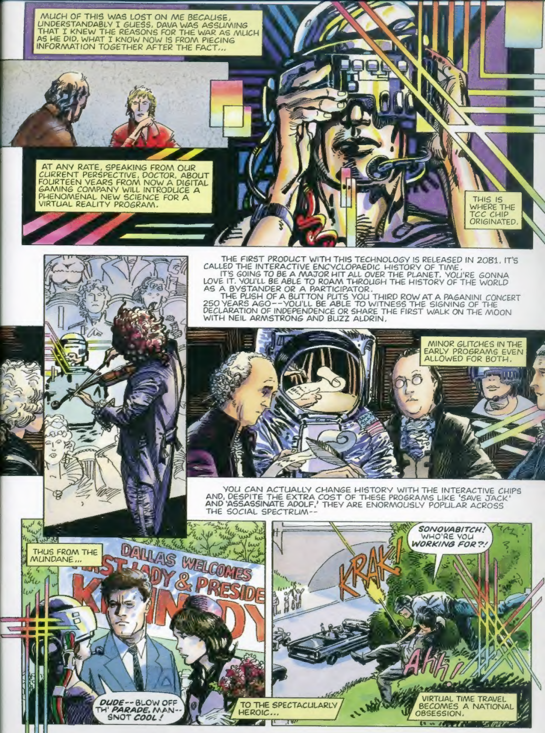
Entire contents copyright © 1997 Barry Windsor-Smith. All rights reserved. Barry Windsor-Smith: STORYTELLER, Young Gods, The Paradoxman, and all characters featured herein and the distinct likenesses thereof are trademarks of Barry Windsor-Smith. The Freebooters is a registered trademark of Barry Windsor-Smith. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Barry Windsor-Smith and Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this publication are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental. Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA

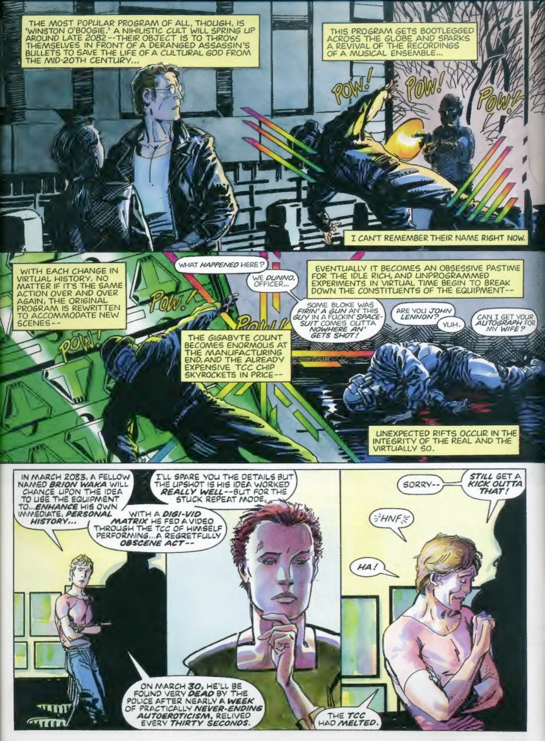

AT OUR LAST SESSION YOU DESCRIBED A MOMENTARY *VISION* OF THE *FUTURE*--
THAT'S HOW THE TIME BIKE *WORKED.*
IT WASN'T A *VISION* OF THE FUTURE, DOCTOR --I LIVED THE FUTURE FOR THIRTY SECONDS--
BECAUSE OF *THIS* YOU HELPED *SAVE YOUR FRIEND'S LIFE.*
AN IMPORTANT *EVENT* UNDER *ANY* CIRCUMSTANCES.
OF COURSE. YES...
WHY DON'T YOU *SIT?*
FEELING *EDGY.*
CHAPTER FIVE --
WHAT WAS YOUR FRIEND'S *NAME AGAIN?*
DAVA-- DEE-AY-VEE-AY.
ANYTHING FURTHER YOU WISH TO TELL ME ABOUT...*DAVA?* OR SHALL WE *MOVE ON?*
DAVA...
THE PARADOX MAN

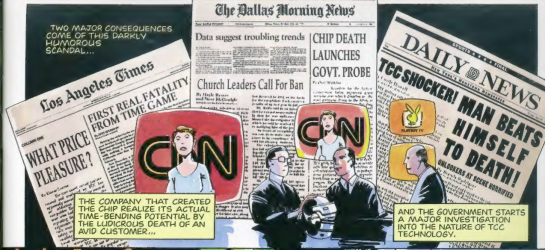

I HADN'T SEEN HIM FOR A FEW DAYS AFTER THAT INCIDENT--
SO I LOOKED AROUND THE STATION FOR HIM.
EVERYBODY KINDA LOOKED THE SAME, I REALIZED...
DINGY, COLORLESS... SHAMBLING...
I STUCK OUT LIKE A BEACON IN MY RED JACKET--
NOT TO MENTION MY SIZE.
THEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT DAVA WAS DELIBERATELY AVOIDING ME--
IF HE COULD SEE ME COMING, HE COULD DUCK AWAY.
I FOUND HIM EVENTUALLY, THOUGH--
IN THE OLD COFFEE SHOP ON THE MAIN CONCOURSE...
THE PLACE WAS TRASHED, BUT PEOPLE USED THE KITCHENS TO COOK WHATEVER FOOD THEY HAD.
ROACH SOUP, MOSTLY.
HE SAT ALONE. HE LOOKED AWFUL.
DAVA?
HE DIDN'T LOOK UP BUT WAVED ME AWAY.
GU...GU... GUWAY. TRISTY-- LIMME BE.
JESUS CHRIST, DAVA --WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?!
I GUESSED THE APE-MAN HAD CAUGHT UP WITH HIM--HE WAS IN REALLY BAD SHAPE.
L...LEMMELONE TCH TCH TRIST--
UM OKA, AH BU OKA--

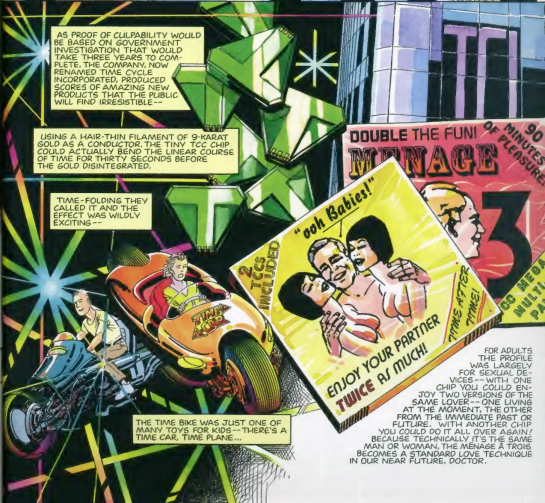

YOU'RE NOT OKAY, MAN--
WILLY DID THIS, DIDN'T HE--
THAT SON OF A BITCH!
DAVA HALF SMILED THROUGH PULPY LIPS --WOUNDS THAT'D PARTLY HEALED AROUND HIS MOUTH CRACKED OPEN AGAIN.
IB...IB WILLY HAB BEAD ME UP...
AH-AH-AH--!
HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH ...CONCENTRATING ON HIS STUTTERING--
UD...
B BE...D... DEAD!
HE NODDED TO HIMSELF, ACKNOWEDGING HIS POINT.
BUT...IF NOT WILLY--THEN WHO? WHO THE HELL BEAT YOU LIKE THIS?!
HE FELL SILENT, LOOKING DOWN THEN UP. HE SIGHED DEEPLY AND FRESH BLOOD RAN FROM HIS MOUTH...
D'YOU MIND IF I SMOKE?
YOU'VE ASKED ME THAT BEFORE, MISTER CAINE--THE ANSWER REMAINS THE SAME...
I DO NOT ALLOW ILLEGAL DRUG USE IN MY OFFICE.
FORTY YEARS FROM NOW TOBACCO IS NO LONGER A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE.
THEN THE FUTURE MUST BE WORSE THAN YOU'VE YET IMPLIED.
BUT I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING THAT IS ILLEGAL.
KLIK
THIS IS NOT REALITY

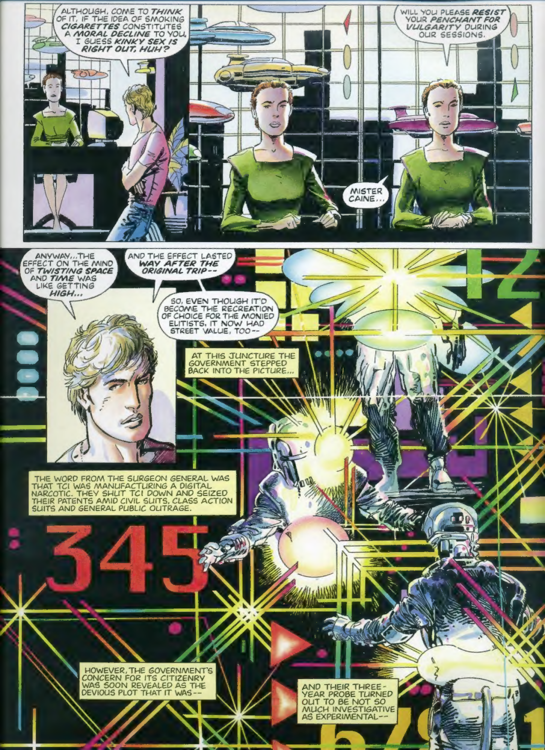

HERE, TAKE A *LOOK*.
WHAT *IS THIS,* MISTER CAINE?
IT'S A COMMERCIALLY MADE *TCC CHIP*, USED IN TIME BIKES AND A *HUNDRED OTHER GADGETS.*
BEFORE THE FEDS *HIJACKED* ITS *PATENT* IN *THE EIGHTIES* IT WAS THE CORE OF EVERY *TIME-FOLD DEVICE MADE.*
I PUT THE *CLASP* ON IT.
IT'S QUITE *TINY* TO BE SO *POWERFUL.*
IT DOESN'T *GENERATE* POWER. IT'S A TRANSFORMER OF NUCLEAR ENERGY.
IT USES ONE SPECIFIC *ELEMENT* TO RUN ON A *ONE-TIME BASIS.*
AND WHAT IS *THAT*, MISTER CAINE?
THE ELEMENT CALLED *AURUM...*
GOLD.
KLIK
DAVA DID HIS BEST TO EXPLAIN HOW IT WAS THAT HIS OWN CONFEDERATES, THE BAND OF THIEVES, HAD BEATEN HIM WITH MAKESHIFT CLUBS BEHIND THE OLD TRAIN ON THE LOWER LEVEL...
DONU
THEY LEFT HIM TO DIE, BUT HE HAD ESCAPED TO THE MAIN FLOOR WHERE I FOUND HIM.
A&W ROOT BEER
Hot Dogs
World's Best COFFEE!
Coke
STRAINING HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD, DAVA STUMBLED THROUGH WHAT HE CALLED HIS 'LITTLE STORY'...
FOR EVEN MORE REASONS THAN BEFORE, I HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY GATHERING ALL THAT HE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME...
MARKE
QuikPrin
THE TCC CHIP, THE WAR--A GLOBAL DOGFIGHT FOR THE SEIZURE AND CONTROL OF ALL PURE TWENTY-FOUR KARAT GOLD--BE IT A GOVERNMENT'S BULLION OR A HOUSEWIFE'S WEDDING BAND--
Kodak

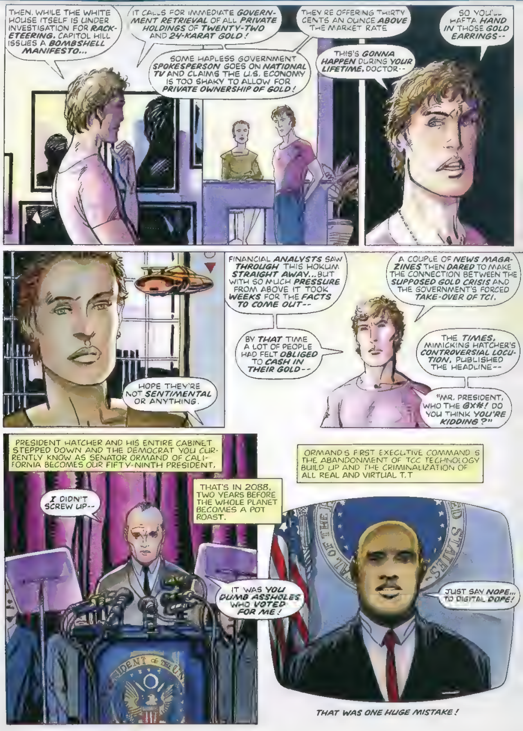

MUCH OF THIS WAS LOST ON ME BECAUSE, UNDERSTANDABLY I GUESS, DAVA WAS ASSUMING THAT I KNEW THE REASONS FOR THE WAR AS MUCH AS HE DID. WHAT I KNOW NOW IS FROM PIECING INFORMATION TOGETHER AFTER THE FACT...
AT ANY RATE, SPEAKING FROM OUR CURRENT PERSPECTIVE, DOCTOR, ABOUT FOURTEEN YEARS FROM NOW A DIGITAL GAMING COMPANY WILL INTRODUCE A PHENOMENAL NEW SCIENCE FOR A VIRTUAL REALITY PROGRAM.
THIS IS WHERE THE TCC CHIP ORIGINATED.
THE FIRST PRODUCT WITH THIS TECHNOLOGY IS RELEASED IN 2081. IT'S CALLED THE INTERACTIVE ENCYCLOPAEDIC HISTORY OF TIME.
IT'S GOING TO BE A MAJOR HIT ALL OVER THE PLANET. YOU'RE GONNA LOVE IT. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO ROAM THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AS A BYSTANDER OR A PARTICIPATOR.
THE PUSH OF A BUTTON PUTS YOU THIRD ROW AT A PAGANINI CONCERT 250 YEARS AGO--YOU'LL BE ABLE TO WITNESS THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OR SHARE THE FIRST WALK ON THE MOON WITH NEIL ARMSTRONG AND BUZZ ALDRIN.
MINOR GLITCHES IN THE EARLY PROGRAMS EVEN ALLOWED FOR BOTH.
YOU CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE HISTORY WITH THE INTERACTIVE CHIPS AND, DESPITE THE EXTRA COST OF THESE PROGRAMS LIKE 'SAVE JACK' AND 'ASSASSINATE ADOLF,' THEY ARE ENORMOUSLY POPULAR ACROSS THE SOCIAL SPECTRUM--
THUS FROM THE MUNDANE...
DALLAS WELCOMES FIRST LADY & PRESIDE KENNEDY
DUDE--BLOW OFF TH' PARADE, MAN--SNOT COOL!
TO THE SPECTACULARLY HEROIC...
SONOVABITCH! WHO'RE YOU WORKING FOR?!
KRAK!
AHH!
VIRTUAL TIME TRAVEL BECOMES A NATIONAL OBSESSION.

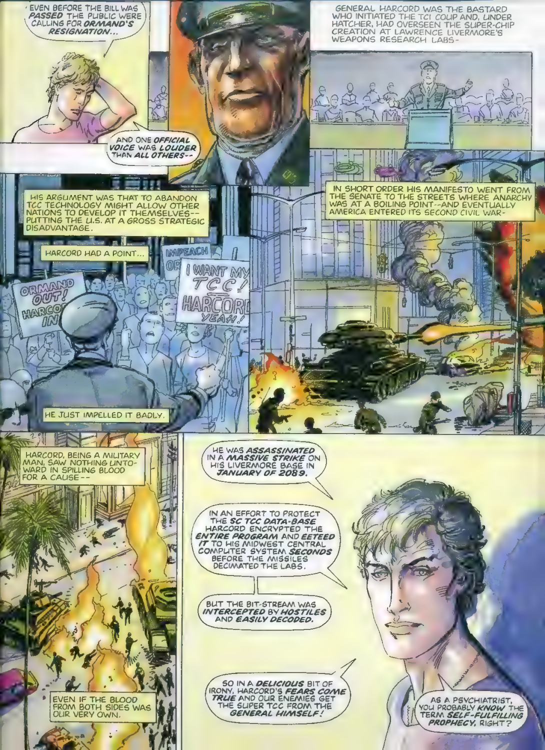

THE MOST POPULAR PROGRAM OF ALL, THOUGH, IS 'WINSTON O'BOOGIE.' A NIHILISTIC CULT WILL SPRING UP AROUND LATE 2082--THEIR OBJECT IS TO THROW THEMSELVES IN FRONT OF A DERANGED ASSASSIN'S BULLETS TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A CULTURAL GOD FROM THE MID-20TH CENTURY...
THIS PROGRAM GETS BOOTLEGGED ACROSS THE GLOBE AND SPARKS A REVIVAL OF THE RECORDINGS OF A MUSICAL ENSEMBLE...
POW!
POW!
POW!
I CAN'T REMEMBER THEIR NAME RIGHT NOW.
WITH EACH CHANGE IN VIRTUAL HISTORY, NO MATTER IF IT'S THE SAME ACTION OVER AND OVER AGAIN, THE ORIGINAL PROGRAM IS REWRITTEN TO ACCOMMODATE NEW SCENES--
POW!
POW!
POW!
WHAT *HAPPENED* HERE?
WE *DUNNO*, OFFICER...
SOME BLOKE WAS *FIRIN' A GUN* AN' THIS *GUY* IN A FUCKIN' *SPACE-SUIT* COMES OUTTA *NOWHERE AN' GETS SHOT!*
THE GIGABYTE COUNT BECOMES ENORMOUS AT THE MANUFACTURING END, AND THE ALREADY EXPENSIVE TCC CHIP SKYROCKETS IN PRICE--
EVENTUALLY IT BECOMES AN OBSESSIVE PASTIME FOR THE IDLE RICH, AND UNPROGRAMMED EXPERIMENTS IN VIRTUAL TIME BEGIN TO BREAK DOWN THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE EQUIPMENT--
ARE YOU *JOHN LENNON?*
YUH.
CAN I GET YOUR *AUTOGRAPH* FOR MY *WIFE?*
UNEXPECTED RIFTS OCCUR IN THE INTEGRITY OF THE REAL AND THE VIRTUALLY SO.
IN MARCH 2083, A FELLOW NAMED *BRION WAKA* WILL CHANCE UPON THE IDEA TO USE THE EQUIPMENT TO...*ENHANCE* HIS OWN IMMEDIATE, *PERSONAL HISTORY...*
I'LL SPARE YOU THE DETAILS BUT THE UPSHOT IS HIS IDEA WORKED *REALLY WELL*--BUT FOR THE STUCK REPEAT MODE.
WITH A *DIGI-VID MATRIX* HE FED A VIDEO THROUGH THE TCC OF HIMSELF PERFORMING...A REGRETFULLY *OBSCENE ACT*--
ON MARCH *30*, HE'LL BE FOUND VERY *DEAD* BY THE POLICE AFTER NEARLY A *WEEK* OF PRACTICALLY *NEVER-ENDING AUTOEROTICISM*, RELIVED EVERY *THIRTY SECONDS*.
THE *TCC* HAD *MELTED*.
SORRY--
STILL GET A *KICK OUTTA THAT!*
HNF
HA!

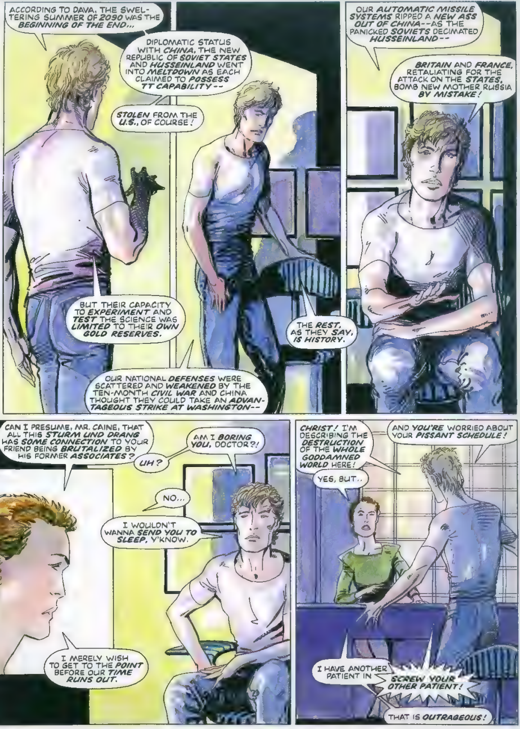

TWO MAJOR CONSEQUENCES COME OF THIS DARKLY HUMOROUS SCANDAL...
Los Angeles Times
FIRST REAL FATALITY FROM TIME GAME
WHAT PRICE PLEASURE?
The Dallas Morning News
Data suggest troubling trends
Church Leaders Call For Ban
CHIP DEATH LAUNCHES GOVT. PROBE
CNN
CNN
DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER
TCC SHOCKER! MAN BEATS HIMSELF TO DEATH!
ONLOOKERS AT SCENE HORRIFIED
PLAYBOY TV
THE COMPANY THAT CREATED THE CHIP REALIZE ITS ACTUAL TIME-BENDING POTENTIAL BY THE LUDICROUS DEATH OF AN AVID CUSTOMER...
AND THE GOVERNMENT STARTS A MAJOR INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE OF TCC TECHNOLOGY.

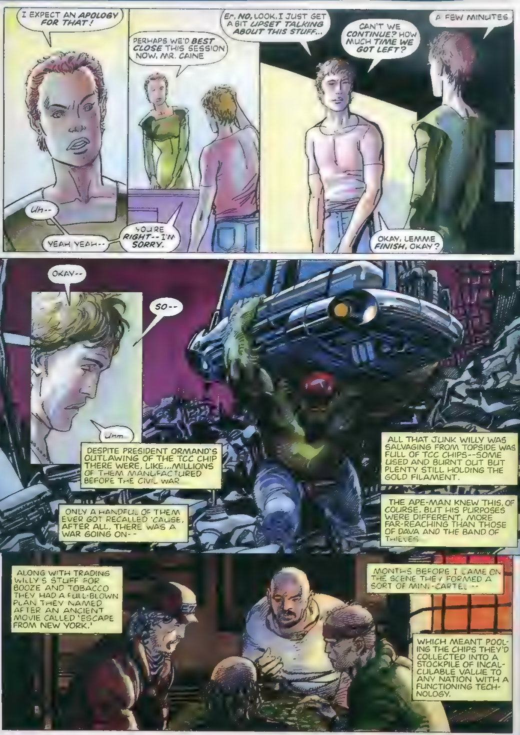

AS PROOF OF CULPABILITY WOULD BE BASED ON GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION THAT WOULD TAKE THREE YEARS TO COMPLETE, THE COMPANY, NOW RENAMED TIME CYCLE INCORPORATED, PRODUCED SCORES OF AMAZING NEW PRODUCTS THAT THE PUBLIC WILL FIND IRRESISTIBLE--
USING A HAIR-THIN FILAMENT OF 9-KARAT GOLD AS A CONDUCTOR, THE TINY TCC CHIP COULD ACTUALLY BEND THE LINEAR COURSE OF TIME FOR THIRTY SECONDS BEFORE THE GOLD DISINTEGRATED.
TIME-FOLDING THEY CALLED IT AND THE EFFECT WAS WILDLY EXCITING--
TCI
DOUBLE THE FUN!
MENAGE
3
90 MINUTES OF PLEASURE!
"ooh Babies!"
2 TCCS INCLUDED
TIME AFTER TIME!
ENJOY YOUR PARTNER TWICE AS MUCH!
TIME CAR
THE TIME BIKE WAS JUST ONE OF MANY TOYS FOR KIDS--THERE'S A TIME CAR, TIME PLANE...
FOR ADULTS THE PROFILE WAS LARGELY FOR SEXUAL DEVICES--WITH ONE CHIP YOU COULD ENJOY TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME LOVER--ONE LIVING AT THE MOMENT, THE OTHER FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST OR FUTURE. WITH ANOTHER CHIP YOU COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN! BECAUSE TECHNICALLY IT'S THE SAME MAN OR WOMAN, THE MÉNAGE À TROIS BECOMES A STANDARD LOVE TECHNIQUE IN OUR NEAR FUTURE, DOCTOR.

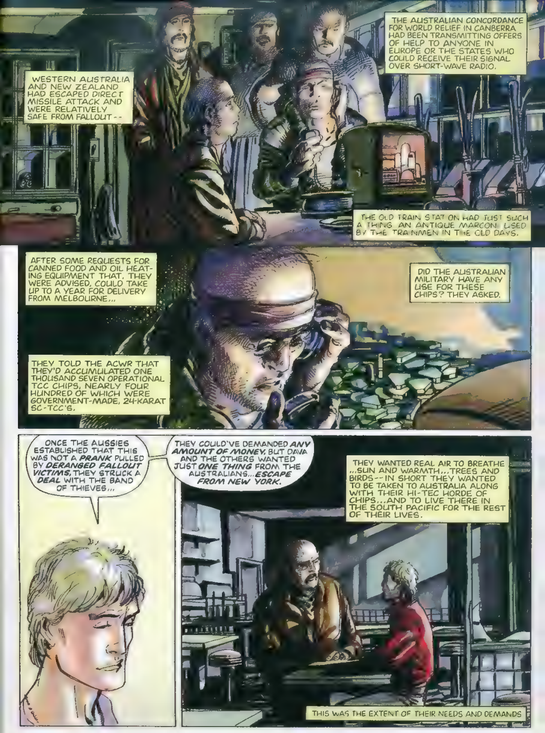

ALTHOUGH, COME TO *THINK* OF IT, IF THE IDEA OF SMOKING *CIGARETTES* CONSTITUTES A *MORAL DECLINE* TO YOU, I GUESS *KINKY SEX IS RIGHT OUT, HUH?*
WILL YOU PLEASE *RESIST* YOUR *PENCHANT FOR VULGARITY* DURING OUR SESSIONS.
MISTER CAINE...
ANYWAY... THE EFFECT ON THE MIND OF *TWISTING SPACE* AND *TIME* WAS LIKE GETTING *HIGH...*
AND THE EFFECT LASTED *WAY AFTER THE ORIGINAL TRIP--*
SO, EVEN THOUGH IT'D BECOME THE RECREATION OF CHOICE FOR THE MONIED ELITISTS, IT NOW HAD STREET VALUE, TOO--
AT THIS JUNCTURE THE GOVERNMENT STEPPED BACK INTO THE PICTURE...
THE WORD FROM THE SURGEON GENERAL WAS THAT TCI WAS MANUFACTURING A DIGITAL NARCOTIC. THEY SHUT TCI DOWN AND SEIZED THEIR PATENTS AMID CIVIL SUITS, CLASS ACTION SUITS AND GENERAL PUBLIC OUTRAGE.
345
HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN FOR ITS CITIZENRY WAS SOON REVEALED AS THE DEVIOUS PLOT THAT IT WAS--
AND THEIR THREE-YEAR PROBE TURNED OUT TO BE NOT SO MUCH INVESTIGATIVE AS EXPERIMENTAL--

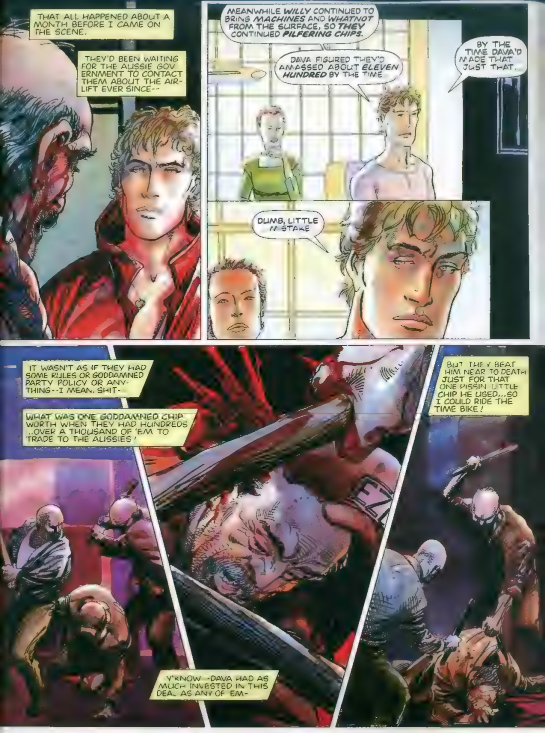

THEN, WHILE THE WHITE HOUSE ITSELF IS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR **RACKETEERING**, CAPITOL HILL ISSUES A **BOMBSHELL MANIFESTO...**
IT CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE **GOVERNMENT RETRIEVAL** OF ALL **PRIVATE HOLDINGS** OF **TWENTY-TWO** AND **24-KARAT GOLD!**
SOME HAPLESS GOVERNMENT **SPOKESPERSON** GOES ON **NATIONAL TV** AND CLAIMS THE U.S. ECONOMY IS TOO SHAKY TO ALLOW FOR **PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF GOLD!**
THEY'RE OFFERING THIRTY CENTS AN OUNCE **ABOVE** THE MARKET RATE
THIS'S **GONNA HAPPEN** DURING **YOUR LIFETIME**, DOCTOR--
SO YOU'LL HAFTA **HAND IN** THOSE **GOLD EARRINGS--**
HOPE THEY'RE NOT **SENTIMENTAL** OR ANYTHING.
FINANCIAL **ANALYSTS** SAW **THROUGH** THIS HOKUM **STRAIGHT AWAY...** BUT WITH SO MUCH **PRESSURE** FROM ABOVE IT TOOK **WEEKS** FOR THE **FACTS TO COME OUT--**
BY **THAT** TIME A LOT OF PEOPLE HAD FELT **OBLIGED** TO **CASH IN THEIR GOLD--**
A COUPLE OF **NEWS MAGAZINES** THEN **DARED** TO MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE **SUPPOSED GOLD CRISIS** AND THE GOVERNMENT'S FORCED **TAKE-OVER OF TCI.**
THE **TIMES**, MIMICKING HATCHER'S **CONTROVERSIAL LOCUTION**, PUBLISHED THE HEADLINE--
"MR. PRESIDENT, WHO THE @X*! DO YOU THINK **YOU'RE KIDDING?**"
PRESIDENT HATCHER AND HIS ENTIRE CABINET STEPPED DOWN AND THE DEMOCRAT YOU CURRENTLY KNOW AS SENATOR ORMAND OF CALIFORNIA BECOMES OUR FIFTY-NINTH PRESIDENT.
I DIDN'T SCREW UP--
THAT'S IN 2088, TWO YEARS BEFORE THE WHOLE PLANET BECOMES A POT ROAST.
IT WAS **YOU DUMB ASSHOLES** WHO **VOTED** FOR ME!
ORMAND'S FIRST EXECUTIVE COMMAND IS THE ABANDONMENT OF TCC TECHNOLOGY BUILD UP AND THE CRIMINALIZATION OF ALL REAL AND VIRTUAL T.T
JUST SAY **NOPE...** TO DIGITAL **DOPE!**
THAT WAS ONE HUGE MISTAKE!

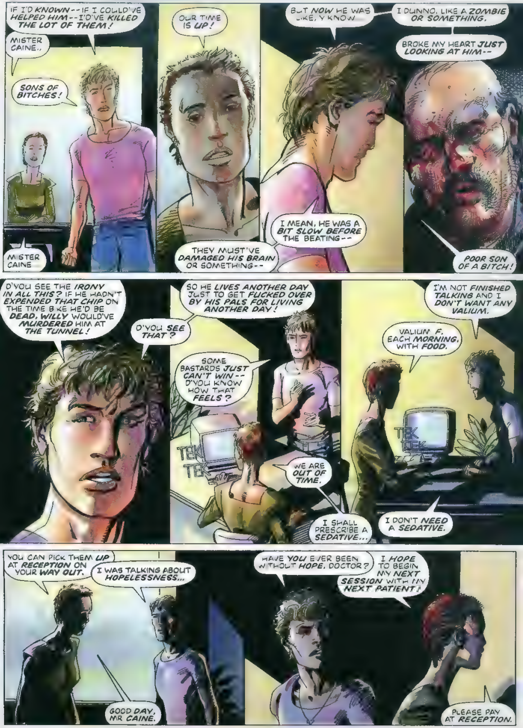

EVEN BEFORE THE BILL WAS *PASSED* THE PUBLIC WERE CALLING FOR *ORMAND'S RESIGNATION*...
AND ONE *OFFICIAL VOICE* WAS *LOUDER* THAN *ALL OTHERS*--
GENERAL HARCORD WAS THE BASTARD WHO INITIATED THE TCI COUP AND, UNDER HATCHER, HAD OVERSEEN THE SUPER-CHIP CREATION AT LAWRENCE LIVERMORE'S WEAPONS RESEARCH LABS-
HIS ARGUMENT WAS THAT TO ABANDON TCC TECHNOLOGY MIGHT ALLOW OTHER NATIONS TO DEVELOP IT THEMSELVES--PUTTING THE U.S. AT A GROSS STRATEGIC DISADVANTAGE.
HARCORD HAD A POINT...
ORMAND OUT! HARCO IN
IMPEACH OR
I WANT MY TCC! HARCORD YEAH!
HE JUST IMPELLED IT BADLY.
IN SHORT ORDER HIS MANIFESTO WENT FROM THE SENATE TO THE STREETS WHERE ANARCHY WAS AT A BOILING POINT--AND EVENTUALLY AMERICA ENTERED ITS SECOND CIVIL WAR-
HARCORD, BEING A MILITARY MAN, SAW NOTHING UNTOWARD IN SPILLING BLOOD FOR A CAUSE--
EVEN IF THE BLOOD FROM BOTH SIDES WAS OUR VERY OWN.
HE WAS *ASSASSINATED* IN A *MASSIVE STRIKE* ON HIS LIVERMORE BASE IN *JANUARY OF 2089.*
IN AN EFFORT TO PROTECT THE *SC TCC DATA-BASE* HARCORD ENCRYPTED THE *ENTIRE PROGRAM* AND *EETEED IT* TO HIS MIDWEST CENTRAL COMPUTER SYSTEM *SECONDS* BEFORE THE MISSILES DECIMATED THE LABS.
BUT THE BIT-STREAM WAS *INTERCEPTED* BY *HOSTILES* AND *EASILY DECODED.*
SO IN A *DELICIOUS* BIT OF IRONY, HARCORD'S *FEARS COME TRUE* AND OUR ENEMIES GET THE SUPER TCC FROM THE *GENERAL HIMSELF!*
AS A PSYCHIATRIST, YOU PROBABLY *KNOW* THE TERM *SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY,* RIGHT?

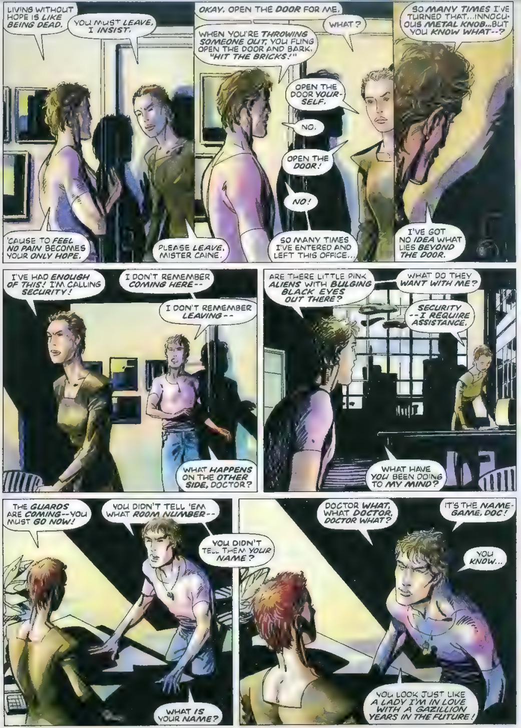

ACCORDING TO DAVA, THE SWELTERING SUMMER OF 2090 WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END...
DIPLOMATIC STATUS WITH CHINA, THE NEW REPUBLIC OF SOVIET STATES AND HUSSEINLAND WENT INTO MELTDOWN AS EACH CLAIMED TO POSSESS TT CAPABILITY--
STOLEN FROM THE U.S., OF COURSE!
BUT THEIR CAPACITY TO EXPERIMENT AND TEST THE SCIENCE WAS LIMITED TO THEIR OWN GOLD RESERVES.
THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY.
OUR NATIONAL DEFENSES WERE SCATTERED AND WEAKENED BY THE TEN-MONTH CIVIL WAR AND CHINA THOUGHT THEY COULD TAKE AN ADVANTAGEOUS STRIKE AT WASHINGTON--
OUR AUTOMATIC MISSILE SYSTEMS RIPPED A NEW ASS OUT OF CHINA--AS THE PANICKED SOVIETS DECIMATED HUSSEINLAND--
BRITAIN AND FRANCE, RETALIATING FOR THE ATTACK ON THE STATES, BOMB NEW MOTHER RUSSIA BY MISTAKE!
CAN I PRESUME, MR. CAINE, THAT ALL THIS STURM UND DRANG HAS SOME CONNECTION TO YOUR FRIEND BEING BRUTALIZED BY HIS FORMER ASSOCIATES?
UH?
AM I BORING YOU, DOCTOR?!
NO...
I WOULDN'T WANNA SEND YOU TO SLEEP, Y'KNOW.
I MERELY WISH TO GET TO THE POINT BEFORE OUR TIME RUNS OUT.
CHRIST! I'M DESCRIBING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WHOLE GODDAMNED WORLD HERE!
YES, BUT..
AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR PISSANT SCHEDULE!
I HAVE ANOTHER PATIENT IN
SCREW YOUR OTHER PATIENT!
THAT IS OUTRAGEOUS!

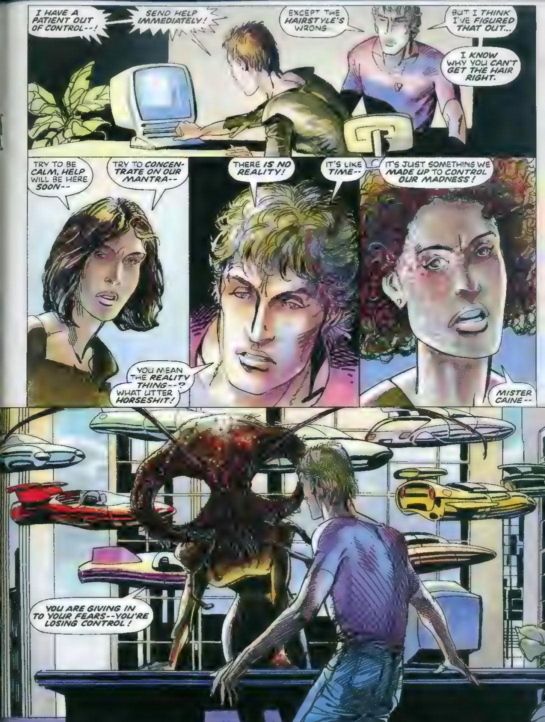

I EXPECT AN APOLOGY FOR THAT!
Uh--
YEAH YEAH--
PERHAPS WE'D BEST CLOSE THIS SESSION NOW, MR. CAINE
YOU'RE RIGHT--I'M SORRY.
Er, NO, LOOK, I JUST GET A BIT UPSET TALKING ABOUT THIS STUFF...
CAN'T WE CONTINUE? HOW MUCH TIME WE GOT LEFT?
A FEW MINUTES
OKAY, LEMME FINISH, OKAY?
OKAY--
SO--
Unn...
DESPITE PRESIDENT ORMAND'S OUTLAWING OF THE TCC CHIP THERE WERE, LIKE...MILLIONS OF THEM MANUFACTURED BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR.
ONLY A HANDFUL OF THEM EVER GOT RECALLED 'CAUSE, AFTER ALL, THERE WAS A WAR GOING ON--
ALL THAT JUNK WILLY WAS SALVAGING FROM TOPSIDE WAS FULL OF TCC CHIPS--SOME USED AND BURNT OUT BUT PLENTY STILL HOLDING THE GOLD FILAMENT.
THE APE-MAN KNEW THIS, OF COURSE, BUT HIS PURPOSES WERE DIFFERENT, MORE FAR-REACHING THAN THOSE OF DAVA AND THE BAND OF THIEVES.
ALONG WITH TRADING WILLY'S STUFF FOR BOOZE AND TOBACCO THEY HAD A FULL-BLOWN PLAN THEY NAMED AFTER AN ANCIENT MOVIE CALLED 'ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK.'
MONTHS BEFORE I CAME ON THE SCENE THEY FORMED A SORT OF MINI-CARTEL--
WHICH MEANT POOLING THE CHIPS THEY'D COLLECTED INTO A STOCKPILE OF INCALCULABLE VALUE TO ANY NATION WITH A FUNCTIONING TECHNOLOGY.

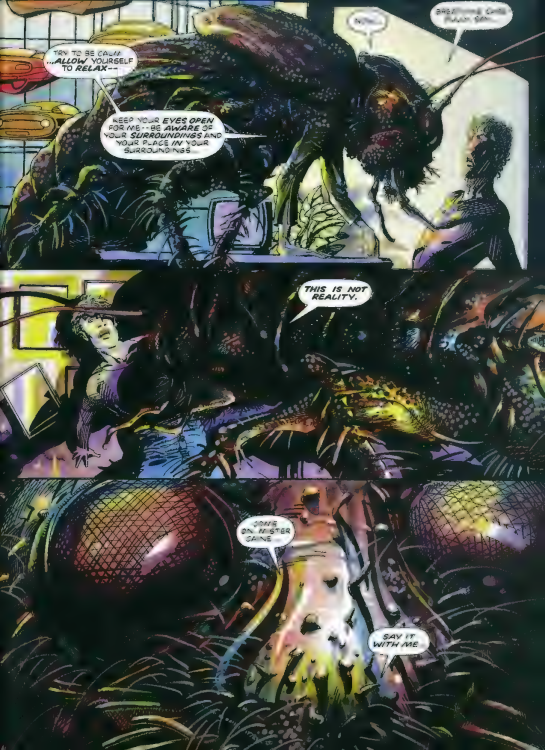

WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND HAD ESCAPED DIRECT MISSILE ATTACK AND WERE RELATIVELY SAFE FROM FALLOUT--
THE AUSTRALIAN CONCORDANCE FOR WORLD RELIEF IN CANBERRA HAD BEEN TRANSMITTING OFFERS OF HELP TO ANYONE IN EUROPE OR THE STATES WHO COULD RECEIVE THEIR SIGNAL OVER SHORT-WAVE RADIO.
THE OLD TRAIN STATION HAD JUST SUCH A THING, AN ANTIQUE MARCONI USED BY THE TRAINMEN IN THE OLD DAYS.
AFTER SOME REQUESTS FOR CANNED FOOD AND OIL HEATING EQUIPMENT THAT, THEY WERE ADVISED, COULD TAKE UP TO A YEAR FOR DELIVERY FROM MELBOURNE...
DID THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY HAVE ANY USE FOR THESE CHIPS? THEY ASKED.
THEY TOLD THE ACWR THAT THEY'D ACCUMULATED ONE THOUSAND SEVEN OPERATIONAL TCC CHIPS, NEARLY FOUR HUNDRED OF WHICH WERE GOVERNMENT-MADE, 24-KARAT SC-TCC'S.
ONCE THE AUSSIES ESTABLISHED THAT THIS WAS NOT A *PRANK* PULLED BY *DERANGED FALLOUT VICTIMS*, THEY STRUCK A *DEAL* WITH THE BAND OF THIEVES...
THEY COULD'VE DEMANDED *ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY*, BUT DAVA AND THE OTHERS WANTED JUST *ONE THING* FROM THE AUSTRALIANS...*ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK.*
THEY WANTED REAL AIR TO BREATHE ...SUN AND WARMTH...TREES AND BIRDS--IN SHORT THEY WANTED TO BE TAKEN TO AUSTRALIA ALONG WITH THEIR HI-TEC HORDE OF CHIPS...AND TO LIVE THERE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.
THIS WAS THE EXTENT OF THEIR NEEDS AND DEMANDS

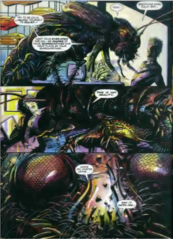

THAT ALL HAPPENED ABOUT A MONTH BEFORE I CAME ON THE SCENE.
THEY'D BEEN WAITING FOR THE AUSSIE GOVERNMENT TO CONTACT THEM ABOUT THE AIRLIFT EVER SINCE--
MEANWHILE **WILLY** CONTINUED TO BRING **MACHINES** AND **WHATNOT** FROM THE SURFACE, SO **THEY** CONTINUED **PILFERING CHIPS**.
DAVA FIGURED THEY'D AMASSED ABOUT **ELEVEN HUNDRED** BY THE TIME
BY THE TIME DAVA'D MADE THAT JUST THAT.
DUMB, LITTLE MISTAKE
IT WASN'T AS IF THEY HAD SOME RULES OR GODDAMNED PARTY POLICY OR ANYTHING--I MEAN, SHIT-
WHAT WAS ONE GODDAMNED CHIP WORTH WHEN THEY HAD HUNDREDS ..OVER A THOUSAND OF 'EM TO TRADE TO THE AUSSIES!
Y'KNOW -DAVA HAD AS MUCH INVESTED IN THIS DEAL AS ANY OF EM-
BUT THEY BEAT HIM NEAR TO DEATH JUST FOR THAT ONE PISSIN LITTLE CHIP HE USED...SO I COULD RIDE THE TIME BIKE!

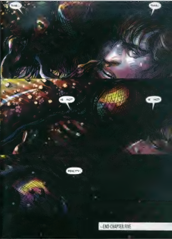

IF I'D *KNOWN*--IF I COULD'VE *HELPED HIM*--I'D'VE *KILLED THE LOT OF THEM!*
MISTER CAINE..
SONS OF BITCHES!
MISTER CAINE
OUR TIME IS *UP!*
BUT *NOW* HE WAS LIKE, Y'KNOW--
I DUNNO, LIKE A *ZOMBIE OR SOMETHING.*
BROKE MY HEART *JUST LOOKING AT HIM*--
I MEAN, HE WAS A *BIT SLOW BEFORE* THE BEATING--
THEY MUST'VE *DAMAGED HIS BRAIN* OR SOMETHING--
POOR SON OF A BITCH!
D'YOU SEE THE *IRONY IN ALL THIS?* IF HE HADN'T *EXPENDED* THAT *CHIP* ON THE TIME BIKE HE'D BE *DEAD. WILLY* WOULD'VE *MURDERED* HIM AT *THE TUNNEL!*
D'YOU *SEE THAT?*
SO HE *LIVES ANOTHER DAY* JUST TO GET *FUCKED OVER* BY HIS *PALS* FOR *LIVING ANOTHER DAY!*
SOME BASTARDS *JUST CAN'T WIN*--D'YOU KNOW HOW THAT *FEELS?*
TEK TEK
WE ARE *OUT OF TIME.*
I SHALL PRESCRIBE A *SEDATIVE*...
I'M NOT *FINISHED TALKING* AND I *DON'T WANT ANY VALIUM.*
VALIUM F. EACH *MORNING*, WITH *FOOD.*
TEK TEK
I DON'T *NEED* A *SEDATIVE.*
YOU CAN PICK THEM *UP* AT *RECEPTION* ON YOUR *WAY OUT.*
I WAS TALKING ABOUT *HOPELESSNESS*...
GOOD DAY, MR CAINE.
HAVE *YOU* EVER BEEN WITHOUT *HOPE*, DOCTOR?
I HOPE TO BEGIN MY *NEXT SESSION* WITH MY *NEXT PATIENT!*
PLEASE PAY AT *RECEPTION.*

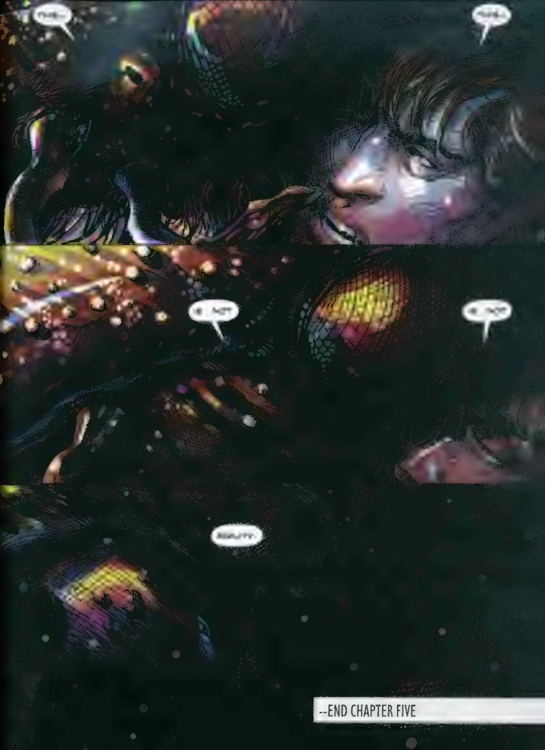

LIVING WITHOUT HOPE IS *LIKE BEING DEAD*.
YOU MUST *LEAVE*, I *INSIST*.
'CAUSE TO *FEEL NO PAIN* BECOMES YOUR *ONLY HOPE*.
PLEASE *LEAVE*, MISTER CAINE.
OKAY. OPEN THE *DOOR* FOR ME.
WHAT?
WHEN YOU'RE *THROWING SOMEONE OUT*, YOU FLING OPEN THE DOOR AND BARK, *"HIT THE BRICKS!"*
OPEN THE DOOR *YOURSELF*.
NO.
OPEN THE *DOOR!*
NO!
SO MANY TIMES I'VE ENTERED AND LEFT THIS OFFICE...
SO *MANY TIMES* I'VE TURNED THAT...INNOCUOUS *METAL KNOB*...BUT YOU *KNOW WHAT*--?
I'VE GOT NO *IDEA* WHAT LIES *BEYOND THE DOOR*.
I'VE HAD *ENOUGH OF THIS!* I'M CALLING *SECURITY!*
I DON'T REMEMBER *COMING HERE*--
I DON'T REMEMBER *LEAVING*--
WHAT *HAPPENS* ON THE *OTHER SIDE*, DOCTOR?
ARE THERE LITTLE PINK *ALIENS* WITH *BULGING BLACK EYES* OUT THERE?
WHAT DO THEY *WANT WITH ME?*
SECURITY --I REQUIRE ASSISTANCE.
WHAT HAVE *YOU* BEEN DOING TO *MY MIND?*
THE *GUARDS* ARE *COMING*--YOU MUST *GO NOW!*
YOU DIDN'T TELL 'EM WHAT *ROOM NUMBER*--
YOU DIDN'T TELL THEM *YOUR NAME?*
WHAT *IS* YOUR *NAME?*
DOCTOR *WHAT*, WHAT *DOCTOR*, *DOCTOR WHAT?*
IT'S THE *NAME-GAME, DOC!*
YOU KNOW...
YOU LOOK JUST LIKE A LADY I'M IN LOVE WITH A GAZILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE!


I HAVE A PATIENT OUT OF CONTROL--!
SEND HELP IMMEDIATELY!
EXCEPT THE HAIRSTYLE'S WRONG
BUT I THINK I'VE FIGURED THAT OUT...
I KNOW WHY YOU CAN'T GET THE HAIR RIGHT.
TRY TO BE CALM, HELP WILL BE HERE SOON--
TRY TO CONCENTRATE ON OUR MANTRA--
YOU MEAN THE REALITY THING--? WHAT UTTER HORSESHIT!
THERE IS NO REALITY!
IT'S LIKE TIME--
IT'S JUST SOMETHING WE MADE UP TO CONTROL OUR MADNESS!
MISTER CAINE--
YOU ARE GIVING IN TO YOUR FEARS--YOU'RE LOSING CONTROL!


TRY TO BE CALM ...ALLOW YOURSELF TO RELAX--
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR ME--BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND YOUR PLACE IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS...
NO...
BREATHING [illegible]
THIS IS NOT REALITY.
COME ON, MISTER CAINE...
SAY IT WITH ME.


TRY TO BE CALM. ...ALLOW YOURSELF TO RELAX--
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR ME--BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND YOUR PLACE IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS...
WOW...
BREATHING CARE-FULLY, SAY...
THIS IS NOT REALITY.
COME ON, MISTER CRANE...
SAY IT WITH ME...


THIS...
THIS...
IS NOT
IS NOT
REALITY.
END CHAPTER FIVE


IS NOT
IS NOT
--END CHAPTER FIVE

PREVIOUSLY IN

On the eve of a celebrated marriage designed to bring two great Pantheons to one Firmament, diplomatic relations among the heavens are threatened by three wayward young Gods.

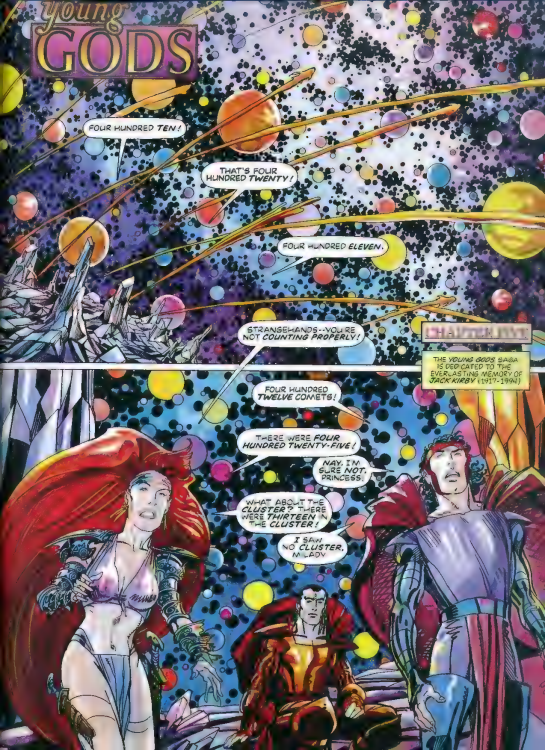
Prince Heros of All-Worlds is the reluctant bridegroom unwilling to divest his freedom to a regal wife he has barely met. His newly reacquainted cousin, Strangehands, and Princess Adastra -- none less than the older sister of the bride-to-be -- are his companions in a final night of adventure.

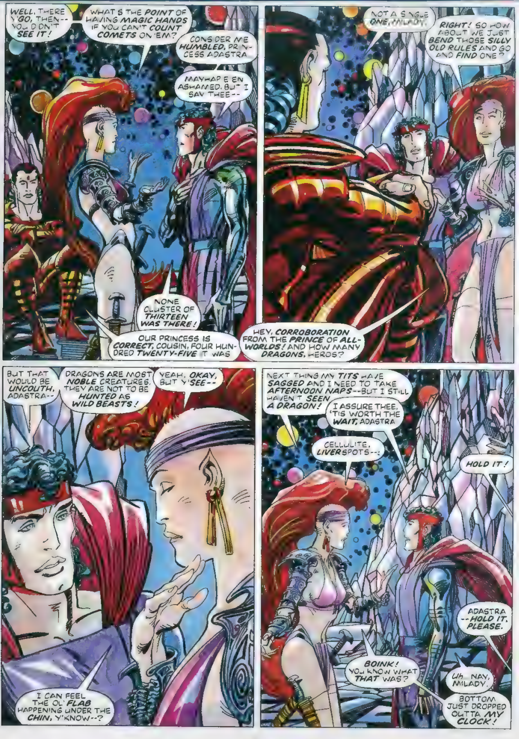
The adventure in question is called a Dragon Hunt and, as all Gods know, the best place for that is out in the far regions of Abraxus known as the Dragon Fields.

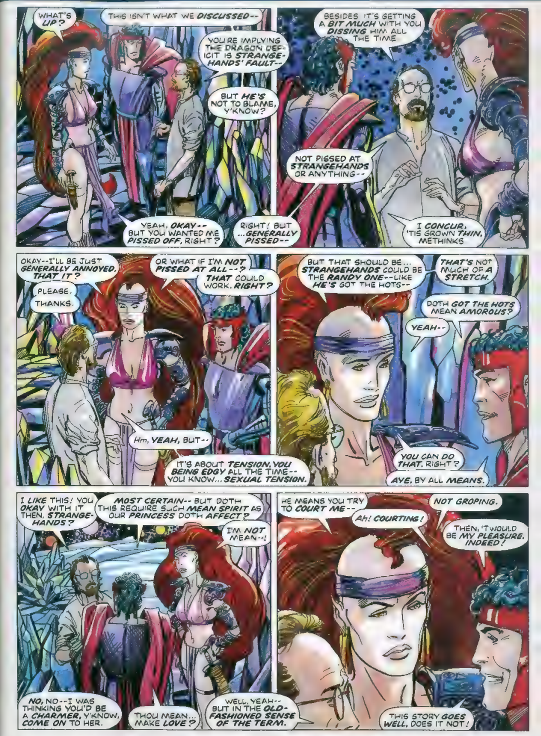
So far the pickings are slim, however, as the code of the Gods forbids actually hunting the beasts down but, rather, one "sits around on your asteroids, waiting for them to turn up," as Adastra almost put it.

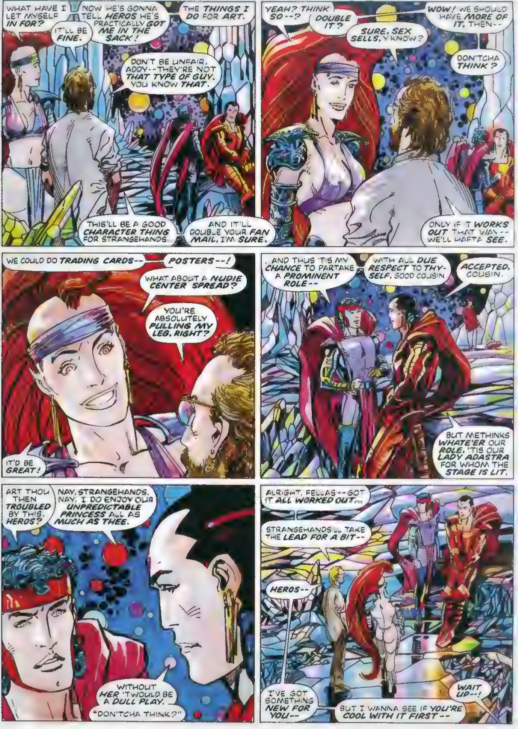
Thus, failing the vigorous excitement of Dragon Spotting, two of the young Gods turn to a more prosaic pastime -- Comet Counting. But even such a playful diversion as this can only be fuel for further debate between Strangehands and the glorious Princess Adastra --

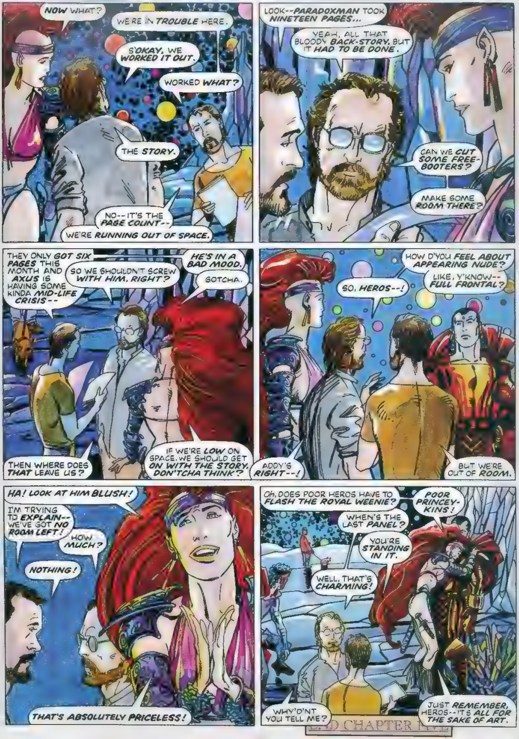
YOUNG GODS


Young GODS
FOUR HUNDRED TEN!
THAT'S FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY!
FOUR HUNDRED ELEVEN.
STRANGEHANDS--YOU'RE NOT COUNTING PROPERLY!
CHAPTER FIVE
THE YOUNG GODS SAGA IS DEDICATED TO THE EVERLASTING MEMORY OF JACK KIRBY (1917-1994)
FOUR HUNDRED TWELVE COMETS!
THERE WERE FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE!
NAY, I'M SURE NOT, PRINCESS.
WHAT ABOUT THE CLUSTER? THERE WERE THIRTEEN IN THE CLUSTER!
I SAW NO CLUSTER, M'LADY


WELL, THERE Y'GO, THEN-- YOU DIDN'T SEE IT!
WHAT'S THE POINT OF HAVING MAGIC HANDS IF YOU CAN'T COUNT COMETS ON 'EM?
CONSIDER ME HUMBLED, PRINCESS ADASTRA.
MAYHAP EVEN ASHAMED. BUT I SAY THEE--
NONE CLUSTER OF THIRTEEN WAS THERE!
OUR PRINCESS IS CORRECT, COUSIN. FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE IT WAS.
HEY, CORROBORATION FROM THE PRINCE OF ALL-WORLDS! AND HOW MANY DRAGONS, HEROS?
NOT A SINGLE ONE, MILADY.
RIGHT! SO HOW ABOUT WE JUST BEND THOSE SILLY OLD RULES AND GO AND FIND ONE?
BUT THAT WOULD BE UNCOUTH, ADASTRA--
DRAGONS ARE MOST NOBLE CREATURES. THEY ARE NOT TO BE HUNTED AS WILD BEASTS!
YEAH, OKAY, BUT Y'SEE--
I CAN FEEL THE OL' FLAB HAPPENING UNDER THE CHIN, Y'KNOW--?
NEXT THING MY TITS HAVE SAGGED AND I NEED TO TAKE AFTERNOON NAPS--BUT I STILL HAVEN'T SEEN A DRAGON!
I ASSURE THEE, 'TIS WORTH THE WAIT, ADASTRA.
CELLULITE, LIVERSPOTS--!
HOLD IT!
ADASTRA --HOLD IT, PLEASE.
BOINK! YOU KNOW WHAT THAT WAS?
UH, NAY, MILADY.
BOTTOM JUST DROPPED OUTTA MY CLOCK!


WHAT'S UP?
THIS ISN'T WHAT WE DISCUSSED--
YOU'RE IMPLYING THE DRAGON DEFICIT IS STRANGEHANDS' FAULT--
BUT HE'S NOT TO BLAME, Y'KNOW?
YEAH, OKAY-- BUT YOU WANTED ME PISSED OFF, RIGHT?
RIGHT! BUT ...GENERALLY PISSED--
BESIDES IT'S GETTING A BIT MUCH WITH YOU DISSING HIM ALL THE TIME
NOT PISSED AT STRANGEHANDS OR ANYTHING--
I CONCUR, 'TIS GROWN THIN, METHINKS
OKAY--I'LL BE JUST GENERALLY ANNOYED. THAT IT?
PLEASE. THANKS.
OR WHAT IF I'M NOT PISSED AT ALL--? THAT COULD WORK, RIGHT?
Hm, YEAH, BUT--
IT'S ABOUT TENSION. YOU BEING EDGY ALL THE TIME-- YOU KNOW... SEXUAL TENSION.
BUT THAT SHOULD BE... STRANGEHANDS COULD BE THE RANDY ONE--LIKE HE'S GOT THE HOTS--
THAT'S NOT MUCH OF A STRETCH.
DOTH GOT THE HOTS MEAN AMOROUS?
YEAH--
YOU CAN DO THAT, RIGHT?
AYE, BY ALL MEANS.
I LIKE THIS! YOU OKAY WITH IT THEN, STRANGEHANDS?
MOST CERTAIN-- BUT DOTH THIS REQUIRE SUCH MEAN SPIRIT AS OUR PRINCESS DOTH AFFECT?
I'M NOT MEAN--!
NO, NO--I WAS THINKING YOU'D BE A CHARMER, Y'KNOW, COME ON TO HER.
THOU MEAN... MAKE LOVE?
WELL, YEAH-- BUT IN THE OLD-FASHIONED SENSE OF THE TERM.
HE MEANS YOU TRY TO COURT ME--
Ah! COURTING!
NOT GROPING.
THEN, 'TWOULD BE MY PLEASURE, INDEED!
THIS STORY GOES WELL, DOES IT NOT!


WHAT HAVE I LET MYSELF *IN FOR?*
IT'LL BE *FINE.*
NOW HE'S GONNA TELL *HEROS* HE'S PRACTICALLY *GOT ME IN THE SACK!*
THE *THINGS I DO FOR ART.*
DON'T BE UNFAIR, ADDY--THEY'RE NOT *THAT TYPE OF GUY.* YOU KNOW *THAT.*
THIS'LL BE A GOOD *CHARACTER THING* FOR STRANGEHANDS
AND IT'LL DOUBLE YOUR *FAN MAIL,* I'M *SURE.*
YEAH? THINK SO--?
DOUBLE IT?
SURE. SEX SELLS, Y'KNOW?
WOW! WE SHOULD HAVE *MORE OF IT,* THEN--
DON'TCHA *THINK?*
ONLY IF IT *WORKS OUT* THAT WAY-- WE'LL HAFTA *SEE.*
WE COULD DO *TRADING CARDS--*
POSTERS--!
WHAT ABOUT A *NUDIE CENTER SPREAD?*
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY *PULLING MY LEG, RIGHT?*
IT'D BE *GREAT!*
AND THUS IT'S MY *CHANCE* TO PARTAKE A *PROMINENT ROLE--*
WITH ALL *DUE RESPECT* TO THYSELF, GOOD COUSIN
ACCEPTED, COUSIN.
BUT METHINKS *WHATE'ER* OUR *ROLE,* 'TIS OUR *LADY ADASTRA* FOR WHOM THE *STAGE IS LIT.*
ART THOU THEN *TROUBLED* BY THIS, *HEROS?*
NAY, STRANGEHANDS, NAY. I DO ENJOY OUR *UNPREDICTABLE PRINCESS* ALL AS *MUCH AS THEE.*
WITHOUT *HER* 'TWOULD BE A *DULL PLAY.*
"DON'TCHA THINK?"
ALRIGHT, FELLAS--GOT *IT ALL WORKED OUT...*
STRANGEHANDS... TAKE THE *LEAD FOR A BIT--*
HEROS--
I'VE GOT SOMETHING *NEW FOR YOU--*
BUT I WANNA SEE IF *YOU'RE COOL WITH IT FIRST--*
WAIT UP--!


NOW WHAT?
WE'RE IN TROUBLE HERE.
S'OKAY, WE WORKED IT OUT.
WORKED WHAT?
THE STORY.
NO-- IT'S THE PAGE COUNT--
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF SPACE.
LOOK--PARADOXMAN TOOK NINETEEN PAGES...
YEAH, ALL THAT BLOODY BACK-STORY, BUT IT HAD TO BE DONE.
CAN WE CUT SOME FREE-BOOTERS?
MAKE SOME ROOM THERE?
THEY ONLY GOT SIX PAGES THIS MONTH AND AXUS IS HAVING SOME KINDA MID-LIFE CRISIS--
SO WE SHOULDN'T SCREW WITH HIM, RIGHT?
HE'S IN A BAD MOOD.
GOTCHA.
THEN WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?
IF WE'RE LOW ON SPACE, WE SHOULD GET ON WITH THE STORY, DON'TCHA THINK?
SO, HEROS--!
HOW D'YOU FEEL ABOUT APPEARING NUDE?
LIKE, Y'KNOW-- FULL FRONTAL?
ADDY'S RIGHT--!
BUT WE'RE OUT OF ROOM.
HA! LOOK AT HIM BLUSH!
I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN-- WE'VE GOT NO ROOM LEFT!
HOW MUCH?
NOTHING!
THAT'S ABSOLUTELY PRICELESS!
OH, DOES POOR HEROS HAVE TO FLASH THE ROYAL WEENIE?
POOR PRINCEY-KINS!
WHEN'S THE LAST PANEL?
YOU'RE STANDING IN IT.
WELL, THAT'S CHARMING!
WHY'D'NT YOU TELL ME?
JUST REMEMBER, HEROS--IT'S ALL FOR THE SAKE OF ART.
END CHAPTER FIVE

PREVIOUSLY IN

Atop a lush green hill overlooking the majestic spires of Shahariza stands the baroque litter of buildings known collectively as The Ram and the Peacock tavern. It is at this unlikely venue that the young prophet, Aran Ana-Kashan, has come to plead the aid of the ancient world's most famous hero, Axus the Great (or Axus the Overweight, as he is referred to behind his back). Aran's mission is to avert the worldwide inferno that he believes is to come.

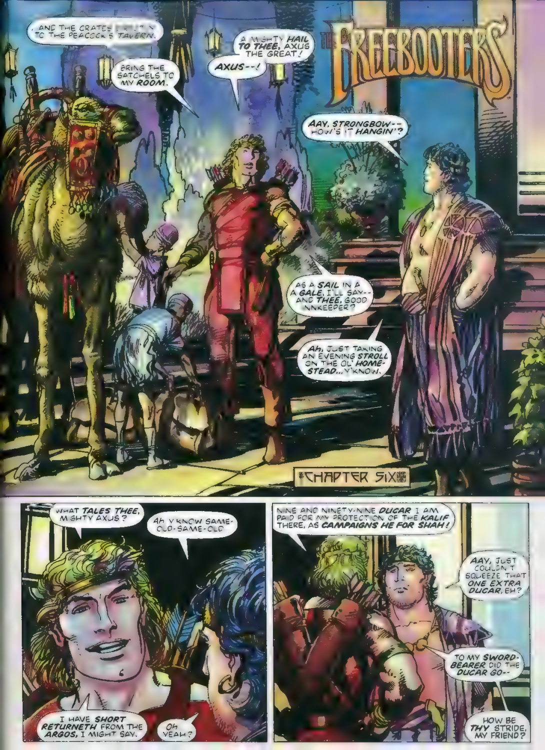
The years have not been kind to Axus since his retirement from the public life of a freebooter and leader of an army known as The Red Legions. That is not to say he could not help Aran's cause if the boy could just make clear the threat of apocalypse as he sees it in his dreams.

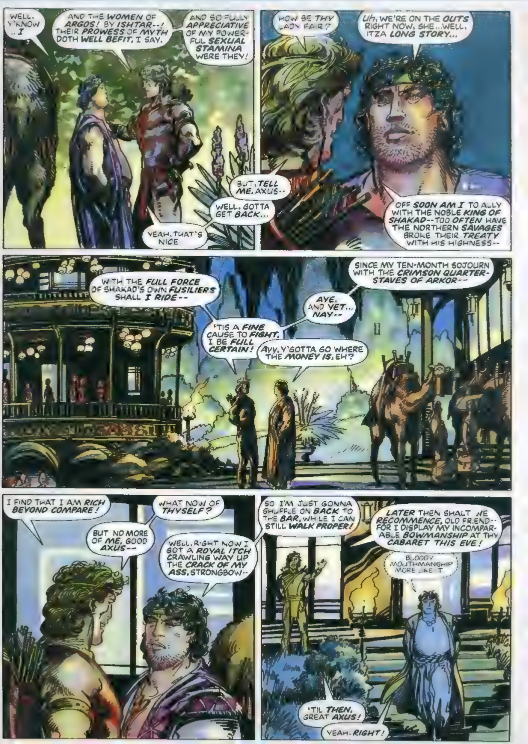
At first simply tongue-tied, Aran is now suspended in a state of shock following a brutal encounter with the Warlock Uta-Prime who claimed that it is he, with the resurrection of the beast Ammon-Gra, who shall bring the world to fiery ruin.

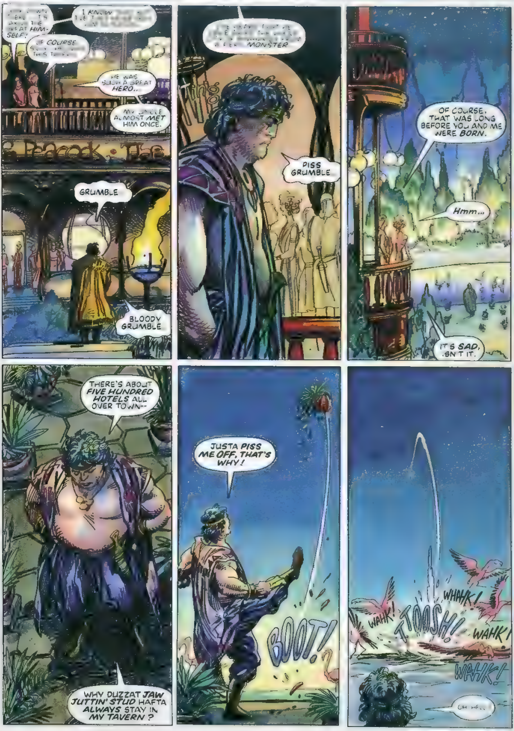
◆

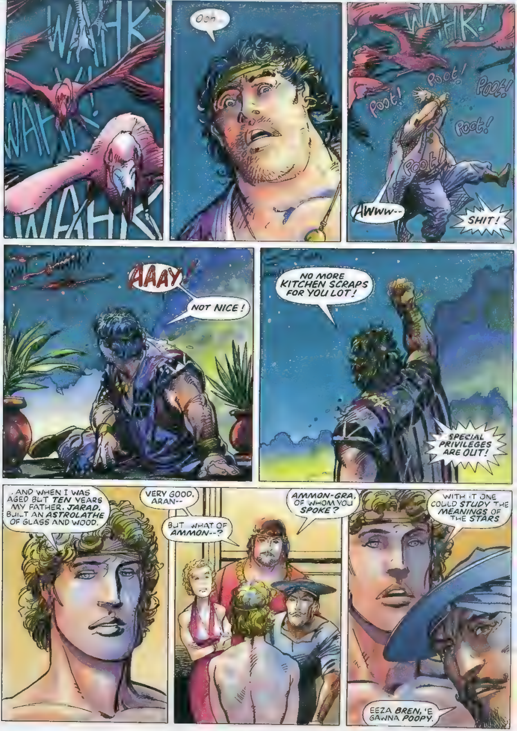
As these doom clouds of destiny encircle our protagonists, nothing more than a fading career, a spreading waistline and a visit from the young buck, Strongbow, can stir action in Axus the Great --

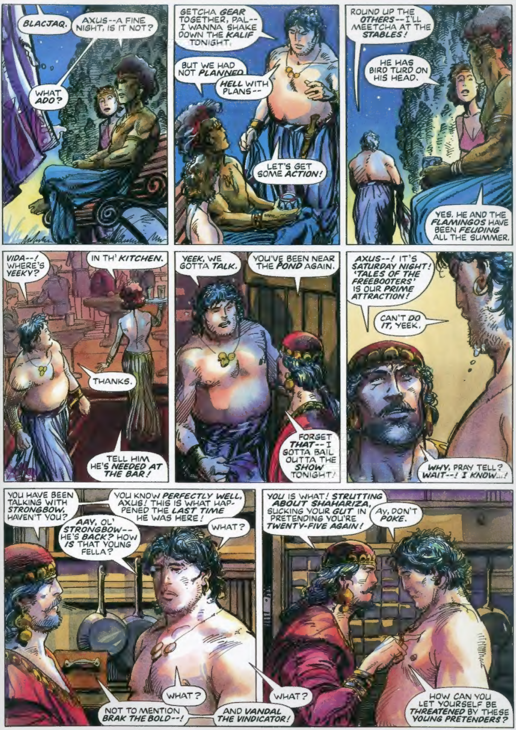
THE FREEBOOTERS

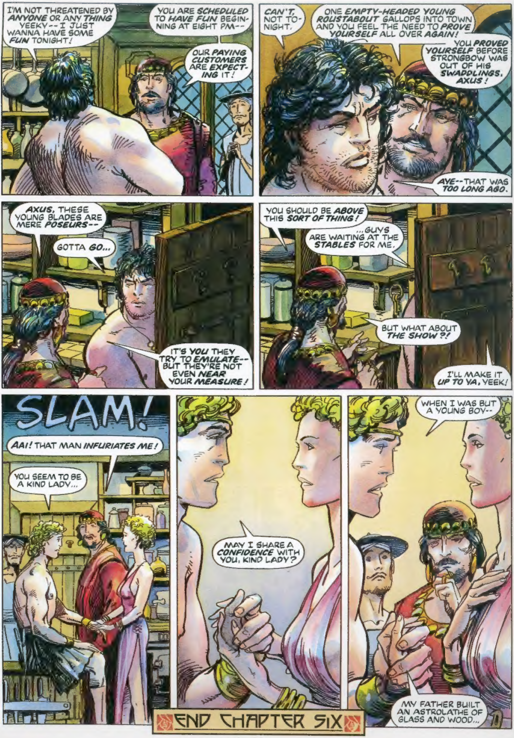

THE FREEBOOTERS
AND THE CRATES DIRECTLY TO THE PEACOCK'S TAVERN.
BRING THE SATCHELS TO MY ROOM.
A MIGHTY HAIL TO THEE, AXUS THE GREAT!
AXUS--!
AAY, STRONGBOW-- HOW'S IT HANGIN'?
AS A SAIL IN A GALE, I'LL SAY-- AND THEE, GOOD INNKEEPER?
AH, JUST TAKING AN EVENING STROLL ON THE OL' HOMESTEAD... Y'KNOW.
CHAPTER SIX
WHAT TALES THEE, MIGHTY AXUS?
AH Y'KNOW SAME-OLD-SAME-OLD
I HAVE SHORT RETURNETH FROM THE ARGOS, I MIGHT SAY.
OH YEAH?
NINE AND NINETY-NINE DUCAR I AM PAID FOR MY PROTECTION OF THE KALIF THERE, AS CAMPAIGNS HE FOR SHAH!
AAY, JUST COULDN'T SQUEEZE THAT ONE EXTRA DUCAR, EH?
TO MY SWORD-BEARER DID THE DUCAR GO--
HOW BE THY STRIDE, MY FRIEND?


WELL, Y'KNOW ..I
AND THE WOMEN OF ARGOS! BY ISHTAR--! THEIR PROWESS OF MYTH DOTH WELL BEFIT, I SAY.
AND SO FULLY APPRECIATIVE OF MY POWERFUL SEXUAL STAMINA WERE THEY!
BUT, TELL ME, AXUS--
WELL, GOTTA GET BACK...
YEAH, THAT'S NICE
HOW BE THY LADY FAIR?
Uh, WE'RE ON THE OUTS RIGHT NOW, SHE...WELL, ITZA LONG STORY...
OFF SOON AM I TO ALLY WITH THE NOBLE KING OF SHAKAD--TOO OFTEN HAVE THE NORTHERN SAVAGES BROKE THEIR TREATY WITH HIS HIGHNESS--
WITH THE FULL FORCE OF SHAKAD'S OWN FUSILIERS SHALL I RIDE--
SINCE MY TEN-MONTH SOJOURN WITH THE CRIMSON QUARTER-STAVES OF ARKOR--
AYE, AND YET... NAY--
'TIS A FINE CAUSE TO FIGHT, I BE FULL CERTAIN!
Ayy, Y'GOTTA GO WHERE THE MONEY IS, EH?
I FIND THAT I AM RICH BEYOND COMPARE!
WHAT NOW OF THYSELF?
BUT NO MORE OF ME, GOOD AXUS--
WELL, RIGHT NOW I GOT A ROYAL ITCH CRAWLING WAY UP THE CRACK OF MY ASS, STRONGBOW--
SO I'M JUST GONNA SHUFFLE ON BACK TO THE BAR, WHILE I CAN STILL WALK PROPER!
LATER THEN SHALT WE RECOMMENCE, OLD FRIEND--FOR I DISPLAY MY INCOMPARABLE BOWMANSHIP AT THY CABARET THIS EVE!
BLOODY MOUTHMANSHIP MORE LIKE IT
'TIL THEN, GREAT AXUS!
YEAH, RIGHT!

HIM-SELF!
I KNOW
OF COURSE THIS TAVERN
HE WAS SUCH A GREAT HERO..
MY UNCLE ALMOST MET HIM ONCE.
Peacock · The
GRUMBLE
BLOODY GRUMBLE
MONSTER
PISS GRUMBLE
OF COURSE, THAT WAS LONG BEFORE YOU AND ME WERE BORN.
Hmm...
IT'S SAD, ISN'T IT.
THERE'S ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED HOTELS ALL OVER TOWN--
WHY DUZZAT JAW JUTTIN' STUD HAFTA ALWAYS STAY IN MY TAVERN?
JUSTA PISS ME OFF, THAT'S WHY!
BOOT!
WAHK!
TOOSH!
WHAHK!
WAHK!
WAHK!
OH HEL..


WAHK
WAHK!
WAHK
Ooh...
WAHK!
Poot!
Poot!
Poot!
Poot!
Poot!
AWWW--
SHIT!
AAAY!
NOT NICE!
NO MORE KITCHEN SCRAPS FOR YOU LOT!
SPECIAL PRIVILEGES ARE OUT!
. AND WHEN I WAS AGED BUT TEN YEARS MY FATHER, JARAD, BUILT AN ASTROLATHE OF GLASS AND WOOD.
VERY GOOD, ARAN--
BUT WHAT OF AMMON--?
AMMON-GRA, OF WHOM YOU SPOKE?
WITH IT ONE COULD STUDY THE MEANINGS OF THE STARS
EEZA BREN, 'E GAWNA POOPY.


BLACJAQ.
AXUS--A FINE NIGHT, IS IT NOT?
WHAT ADO?
GETCHA GEAR TOGETHER, PAL-- I WANNA SHAKE DOWN THE KALIF TONIGHT.
BUT WE HAD NOT PLANNED
HELL WITH PLANS--
LET'S GET SOME ACTION!
ROUND UP THE OTHERS--I'LL MEETCHA AT THE STABLES!
HE HAS BIRD TURD ON HIS HEAD.
YES. HE AND THE FLAMINGOS HAVE BEEN FEUDING ALL THE SUMMER.
VIDA--! WHERE'S YEEKY?
IN TH' KITCHEN.
THANKS.
TELL HIM HE'S NEEDED AT THE BAR!
YEEK, WE GOTTA TALK.
YOU'VE BEEN NEAR THE POND AGAIN.
FORGET THAT--I GOTTA BAIL OUTTA THE SHOW TONIGHT!
AXUS--! IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT! 'TALES OF THE FREEBOOTERS' IS OUR PRIME ATTRACTION!
CAN'T DO IT, YEEK.
WHY, PRAY TELL? WAIT--! I KNOW...!
YOU HAVE BEEN TALKING WITH STRONGBOW, HAVEN'T YOU?
YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL, AXUS! THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME HE WAS HERE!
AAY, OL' STRONGBOW--HE'S BACK? HOW IS THAT YOUNG FELLA?
WHAT?
WHAT?
NOT TO MENTION BRAK THE BOLD--!
WHAT?
AND VANDAL THE VINDICATOR!
YOU IS WHAT! STRUTTING ABOUT SHAHARIZA, SUCKING YOUR GUT IN PRETENDING YOU'RE TWENTY-FIVE AGAIN!
AY, DON'T POKE.
HOW CAN YOU LET YOURSELF BE THREATENED BY THESE YOUNG PRETENDERS?


I'M NOT THREATENED BY ANYONE OR ANY THING YEEKY--I JUST WANNA HAVE SOME FUN TONIGHT!
YOU ARE SCHEDULED TO HAVE FUN BEGINNING AT EIGHT PM--
OUR PAYING CUSTOMERS ARE EXPECTING IT!
CAN'T, NOT TONIGHT.
ONE EMPTY-HEADED YOUNG ROUSTABOUT GALLOPS INTO TOWN AND YOU FEEL THE NEED TO PROVE YOURSELF ALL OVER AGAIN!
YOU PROVED YOURSELF BEFORE STRONGBOW WAS OUT OF HIS SWADDLINGS, AXUS!
AYE--THAT WAS TOO LONG AGO.
AXUS, THESE YOUNG BLADES ARE MERE POSEURS--
GOTTA GO...
IT'S YOU THEY TRY TO EMULATE--BUT THEY'RE NOT EVEN NEAR YOUR MEASURE!
YOU SHOULD BE ABOVE THIS SORT OF THING!
...GUYS ARE WAITING AT THE STABLES FOR ME.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SHOW?!
I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YA, YEEK!
SLAM!
AAI! THAT MAN INFURIATES ME!
YOU SEEM TO BE A KIND LADY...
MAY I SHARE A CONFIDENCE WITH YOU, KIND LADY?
WHEN I WAS BUT A YOUNG BOY--
MY FATHER BUILT AN ASTROLATHE OF GLASS AND WOOD...
END CHAPTER SIX

WINDSOR-SMITH STUDIO™

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH — CREATIVE MAESTRO
ALEX BIALY — PRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION
JOON KOSTAR — LETTERING AND COPY EDITING
TOM VINCENT — COLORING
HARRIS M. MILLER II — REPRESENTATION
CARY GRAZZINI — PRODUCTION LIAISON FOR DARK HORSE
DIANA SCHUTZ — EDITORIAL LIAISON FOR DARK HORSE

MIKE RICHARDSON • PUBLISHER • NEIL HANKERSON • EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT • DAVID SCROGGY • VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLISHING • LOU BANK • VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & MARKETING • ANDY KARABATSOS • VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE • MARK ANDERSON • GENERAL COUNSEL • MELONEY C. CHADWICK • DIRECTOR OF EDITORIAL ADM. • RANDY STRADLEY • CREATIVE DIRECTOR • CINDY MARKS • DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION & DESIGN • MARK COX • ART DIRECTOR • SEAN TIERNEY • COMPUTER GRAPHICS DIRECTOR • MICHAEL MARTENS • DIRECTOR OF SALES • TOD BORLESKE • DIRECTOR OF LICENSING • MARK ELLINGTON • DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS • DALE LAFOUNTAIN • DIRECTOR OF M.I.S.

THE PARADOXMAN • CHAPTER 5

STORY AND ART — BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
COLOR — BWS WITH TOM VINCENT
LETTERING — JOON KOSTAR

YOUNG GODS • CHAPTER 5

STORY AND ART — BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
COLOR — BWS
LETTERING — JOON KOSTAR

THE FREEBOOTERS • CHAPTER 6

STORY AND ART — BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
COLOR — BWS WITH TOM VINCENT
LETTERING — JOON KOSTAR

THIS IS NOT REALITY

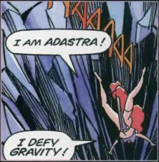
WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO WRITE YOUR COMMENTS TO:
BWS: STORYTELLER • DARK HORSE COMICS
10956 SE MAIN ST. • MILWAUKIE, OR 97222
(E-MAIL: DIANAS @ DHORSE.COM)

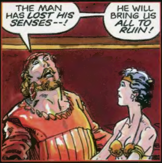
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH STORYTELLER™

COMING NEXT MONTH:

YOUNG GODS

Two back-to-back chapters. It's "Take 2" of this month's Chapter 5; plus, in Chapter 7, the spurned and befuddled Strangehands takes flight across the farthest heavens while Adastra just can't seem to get off the ground!


I AM ADASTRA!
I DEFY GRAVITY!

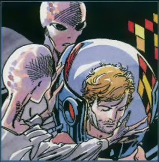

THE MAN HAS LOST HIS SENSES--!
HE WILL BRING US ALL TO RUIN!

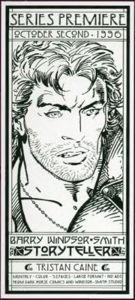
THE FREEBOOTERS

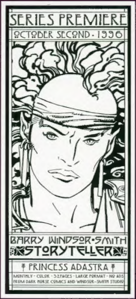
Axus and his companions are about to get into more trouble than they had imagined, as they attempt a bit of freebooting at the palace of Kalif-Anuk!

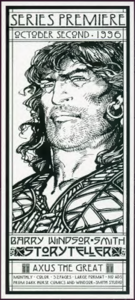
THE PARADOXMAN

TRISTAN CAINE




SERIES PREMIERE
OCTOBER SECOND · 1996
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
STORYTELLER
TRISTAN CAINE
MONTHLY · COLOR · 52 PAGES · LARGE FORMAT · NO ADS
FROM DARK HORSE COMICS AND WINDSOR-SMITH STUDIO


SERIES PREMIERE
OCTOBER SECOND · 1996
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
STORYTELLER
PRINCESS ADASTRA
MONTHLY · COLOR · 52 PAGES · LARGE FORMAT · NO ADS
FROM DARK HORSE COMICS AND WINDSOR-SMITH STUDIO


SERIES PREMIERE
OCTOBER SECOND · 1996
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
STORYTELLER
AXUS THE GREAT
MONTHLY · COLOR · 52 PAGES · LARGE FORMAT · NO ADS
FROM DARK HORSE COMICS AND WINDSOR-SMITH STUDIO

DARK HORSE COMICS

WINDSOR-SMITH STUDIO